

Dignity
in dying
your life, your choice

NEWS

ISSUE 8, SUMMER 2008



Debbie fights for legal clarity to protect her husband from prosecution

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Dignity in Dying's mission:

- Patient choice at the end of life
- A dignified death for all

Dignity in Dying strongly supports good palliative care

Dignity in Dying is also the leading supplier of advance decisions in the UK

Dignity in Dying is supported entirely by voluntary contributions from private individuals and is independent of any political, religious or other organisation.

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The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of Dignity in Dying, but may be those of individual contributors.

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Sarah Wootton, Chief Executive



I recently attended my first Dignity in Dying members' meeting in Manchester. Hearing about your experiences redoubled my

motivation to continue our campaigning, both to change the law on assisted dying, and to secure wider improvements in end-of-life choices and care. Many members I met in Manchester had the simple request that should they become terminally ill, they should have the option to end their life in dignity at a time of their choosing.

Even in the short time that I have been at Dignity in Dying, I have seen that the staff, the Board and you, our members and supporters, are totally committed to achieving greater patient choice at the end of life. But we know we all have to work hard to achieve this aim. We have to continue pressing our message home to the media, members of the public and politicians. Real people's voices make all the difference: the more we can all do to add volume to our voice the better, whether it's lobbying your local MP, asking friends and family to join us, or donating to our cause.

This issue features an interview with one of our members, Debbie Purdy, who is challenging the Director of Public Prosecutions to issue a statement on his policy towards family and friends who accompany a loved one to die overseas. Her case highlights the double injustice of the current situation: it is unjust that Debbie must go overseas for the kind of death she wants, and it is unjust

that if her husband accompanies her he faces up to 14 years in prison.

I am aware that it has been a while since there was a public assisted dying campaign, but I am determined to bring about change. And some things are changing: we have some good news from Europe with another country, Luxembourg, legalising assisted dying. There has also been mounting pressure for legal change in France, following the high profile case of Chantal Sébire (see pages 4 and 5).

Further afield, there is now ten years of evidence from Oregon showing that legalising assisted dying does not lead to vulnerable people being targeted. In fact, it has led to improvements in end-of-life care for everyone (see page 11).

And on the home front, Dignity in Dying was commissioned by the Department of Health to provide guidance for health professionals about advance decisions (see page 10). There was also a debate about assisted dying in the Scottish Parliament (see pages 8 to 9).

On the opposite page, you can see that we are producing a charter setting out what we believe is needed for a dignity at the end of life. We welcome your feedback on this or any other matters raised in this newsletter.

Finally, I'd like to thank all members for your generous support and tireless campaigning.

Sarah Wootton

A Charter for Dignity at the End of Life

Dignity in Dying will soon launch its Charter for Dignity at the End of Life. The Charter will set out Dignity in Dying's vision of what makes a good, dignified death, including the legal option for a terminally ill, mentally competent adult to have an assisted death, subject to a range of safeguards.

Dignity in Dying's Charter looks at the journey of a terminally ill person from diagnosis and ongoing care through to death itself, and makes key recommendations on how to improve the experience of terminally ill people, from access to care, and greater choice over how and where they die, to improved support for their carers.

Foundations for Dignity at the End of Life

The Charter sets out the principles that we believe are the foundations for dignity at the end of life.

They are

I want **choice** over:

- Where I die
- Who is there when I die
- When my treatment is stopped

I want **control** over:

- When I die
- My pain and symptom relief
- Planning the end of my life

I want **access** to:

- Expert information on my choices for end-of-life care
- Good quality palliative care that is tailored to my needs
- Support for my carers and family members

Setting the agenda

The Charter sets the standard for the care and choices that should be available to terminally ill people in Britain in the twenty-first century and aims to influence Government policy in this area.

The last issue of Dignity in Dying News featured information on the review of the NHS in England, led by Lord Darzi. We'd like to thank all our supporters who contributed to the review. This review will feed into the End of Life Care Strategy - which is a long-term project by the Government to develop a strategy to meet the health and social care needs

and preferences of all adult patients approaching the end of their lives.

Dignity in Dying believes it is absolutely vital that the End of Life Care Strategy reflects the need for greater patient choice at the end of life, and delivers this. To this end we submitted a response to the Government's consultation on the strategy and have met with the Department of Health to discuss it.

However, the Charter for Dignity at the End of Life will be a vital way of emphasising to the public and politicians, our point that patient choice needs to be integral to the the End of Life Care Strategy. This will ensure it succeeds in achieving the fundamental aim of improving people's experience of dying.

We believe that a key stage on the way to Government accepting the need to legalise assisted dying, is for it to accept that patient choice needs to be part of end-of-life care in the way it is now integral to other elements of healthcare. The Charter will be launched in June 2008 and will include new evidence about public opinion on what makes a dignified death.

Members' meetings

In April Dignity in Dying visited Manchester. As Sarah explains on page 2, this proved to be a valuable and enjoyable opportunity for staff and Board members to meet local Dignity in Dying members and supporters.

We are planning regional visits to Brighton and Exeter later in the year. Look out for more information in future issues of Dignity in Dying News!

Reminder: new address

Dignity in Dying's offices are now based at
181 Oxford Street, London, W1D 2JT.

If you write to us, please remember to use this address, not our previous address (which was 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London).

Thank you!

Europeans champion our cause

Pressure is mounting across Europe to introduce assisted dying laws. In this issue, we take a look at the legal situation in different countries across the continent and see how laws are changing.

Luxembourg is the latest country to allow people to die with dignity. France is reviewing its laws, following a high profile case. There have been widespread debates in Italy. And it is already legal in three other countries. All this shows that the UK is not alone in calling for legislation to ensure that terminally ill people can have choice over how and when they die.

France

There has been a public outcry following the case of Chantal Sébire, a mother of three, who was refused an assisted death. This decision prompted President Nicolas Sarkozy to order a study of possible amendments to the law which lays down guidelines for the end of life. Several senior French politicians said they favoured a right to assisted suicide in extreme cases such as Chantal Sébire's.

The 52-year-old former teacher was severely disfigured by cancer of the sinuses, a rare form of the disease that is incurable and extremely painful. Her eyelids and nose had swollen to several times their normal size and Chantal had lost her sight and senses of smell and taste. She wanted to have an assisted death surrounded by her family. Her stated wish was:

"to die partying surrounded by my children, friends and doctors before falling asleep for good at dawn".



Red areas show where pressure is growing, blue where law has changed already

Chantal's lawyer had appealed to a court in Dijon for a doctor's right to help her end her life in dignity but this was refused. Later that week, she was found dead in her home. An inquest into her death found that Chantal did not die of natural causes.

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, a former doctor and founder of the charity Medecins

sans Frontieres said it was wrong that Chantal should have to "commit suicide in a clandestine way, which would cause suffering to everyone, especially her loved ones".

Chantal's case provoked worldwide media attention. Sarah Wootton appeared on CNN International and BBC News, and Dignity in Dying provided comment for the Telegraph and many other newspapers.

There are three EU countries where assisted dying is legal - Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland. Meanwhile, Luxembourg introduced a law in February, which is expected to come into effect later this year.

Luxembourg

In February, the Luxembourg Parliament approved a Law on the Right to Die with Dignity, which is similar to the current legislation in Belgium. This allows a person who is suffering unbearably from an illness, and is mentally competent, to request medical assistance to die. The law was only narrowly passed for approval by a majority of four and it is the first time in 29 years that the Christian Social People's Party has been defeated in Parliament. The Bill was passed at the same time as a Bill on palliative care so the Government will have to find a way to make both pieces of legislation work effectively together.

Jean Huss, a Green Party MP and co-sponsor of the Bill, said: "With this law, people will finally have a free choice. Everybody can now have palliative care but those who find themselves in a desperate situation can now also ask legally for active euthanasia or assisted

suicide under certain conditions spelled out in the law."

Belgium

The Belgian Act on Euthanasia was passed in May 2002. The law allows adults who are in a "futile medical condition of constant and unbearable physical or mental suffering that cannot be alleviated" to request voluntary euthanasia.

The Netherlands

This was the first country in the world to introduce an assisted dying law in 2002. The law only permits patients the choice if they have an incurable condition and face unbearable suffering. They also have to be mentally competent and obtain a second medical opinion. So far there have been about 3,500 cases a year.

Switzerland

Voluntary euthanasia is forbidden in Switzerland. However, Article 115 of the Swiss Penal Code exempts people who assist someone to commit suicide, if they act with entirely honourable motives. This includes assisting in the suicide of a person who is suffering unbearably from illness. The code applies to doctors and members of the public.

Italy

Italian law allows patients to refuse care but assisted dying is still illegal. Two cases have caused public debate about this inconsistency. In 2006, Piergiorgio Welby, who had a severe form of muscular dystrophy, died after a battle to end his life. A judge ruled that he did not have the right to remove his respirator. When a doctor switched off his life support machine, he was accused but later cleared of 'consensual homicide'.

In 2007, a football referee, Giovanni Nuvoli, 53, went on a hunger strike when he was not allowed to die without suffering. He also had muscular dystrophy. Following these cases, Italy's Health Minister, Livia Turco has called for a law to allow 'sick people to express their will'.

Despite strong opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, the Italian Parliament is now discussing proposals to allow 'living wills', documents expressing people's wishes if they become unable to decide for themselves.

Keeping up the pressure in the UK

This pressure for change across Europe demonstrates, once again, just how many people want the option of choice at the end of life. With more countries across the EU introducing assisted dying laws, it is time for our Government to take notice and properly debate the issue. Time and time again, the evidence shows that where assisted dying is legalised, care for the dying improves as well, and clearly the public support laws that give them choice.

Dignity in Dying will keep you updated on developments in Europe in future newsletters.



Jean Huss

For more information about assisted dying across the world, visit: www.dignityindying.org.uk/ information

Will my husband be sent to prison? Debbie fights for clarity

Debbie Purdy is challenging the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to issue a statement about his policy towards people who accompany a loved one overseas to die. She tells Dignity in Dying News why she has launched this campaign.

I was diagnosed with Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis in 1995 at the age of 31.

As the illness progressed I was forced to make changes to my life: I had been living overseas but by 1997 I was struggling to cope and I moved back to the UK with my partner Omar. We married the following year.

By 2001, I was using a wheelchair permanently and finding everyday tasks like showering or cooking more difficult, and often impossible without help. By 2006, my arms were getting weaker and propelling my chair was getting much harder. Even simple things like brushing my teeth were becoming impossible.

Last year, my condition deteriorated further. I can't cut things up, I drop things a lot and I am prone to choking fits when I drink. I now need to use an electric wheelchair and take painkillers every day. Maintaining my balance is difficult, and this can be both irritating and embarrassing. I experience dry mouth from time to time and generally find everyday activities harder. There is no cure for MS and the recent developments in treatment, while encouraging, are all used on the more common



relapsing/remitting form of the disease, not the primary progressive form that I have.

My wishes

I have always been a fiercely independent woman. There was nothing that I or anyone else could do to prevent MS taking away my ability to walk, run and dance, but it is not inevitable that I lose my autonomy or dignity and I will fight with every breath to keep those.

Should living become unbearable to me, I want to be able to ask for, and receive help to die with dignity. British law does not allow this, and makes assisting someone to die a crime, so my

options are to attempt suicide myself, and risk making matters worse, or to travel to Switzerland to have an assisted death at Dignitas.

That is the worst thing about the law - because I can not have an assisted death here in the UK, I will have to guess if I think life will become 'unbearable' (far from a certainty), at what time that will be, and then decide to go when I am still physically able to make all the arrangements and travel by myself.

My husband, Omar, knows that if he was able to help me collect the necessary paperwork and make travel arrangements, I could delay making this decision, maybe forever, and for this reason he is prepared to risk a prison sentence.

I am not prepared to put him in this position. I love him and do not want him to risk ending up in prison. I do not want him to suffer more than necessary. Being bereaved is devastating enough, but Omar is from overseas which would make being caught up in the legal system all the more daunting.

Legal action

My decision to ensure Omar is not prosecuted for assisting my suicide



Debbie fears for her husband, Omar

means that if I am to go to Dignitas, I need to do so at a time when I can make all the arrangements and travel by myself. I want to know exactly where I stand on this, which is why I am seeking legal clarity on the law around assisting a suicide.

Last year my solicitor wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions requesting a statement about his prosecution policy in cases of assisted suicide, where a relative or

friend assists a person to travel to a country where assisting someone to die is not a criminal offence.

The DPP replied stating that there is no such policy in existence and that one will not be issued. My solicitor continues to seek clarity on the law on assisting a suicide, so that I can act with legal certainty - knowing for sure whether or not Omar will be prosecuted if he accompanies me to Switzerland. But in the meantime I am left with no choice. If anyone who helps me is going to be liable to prosecution, then I must make the arrangements myself. I am not prepared to allow anyone else to bear the consequences for my decisions.

The dignity of being a competent, autonomous, adult is something I am not prepared to lose - being dependant on someone else for a

shower does not affect my dignity - having someone else be prepared to face jail if they help me does. Ultimately all this means that I will be forced to end my life sooner than I would want to. I hope that one day the Government will recognise that this is inhumane and that the law should be changed.

I do not want my husband or any other person dear to me to be made a criminal for what I see as an act of love and humanity.

Support Debbie!

You are likely to hear and read lots about Debbie's case in the media in the coming weeks and months. You can support Debbie by writing or speaking to the media about the need for a change in the law.

Help us campaign so that terminally ill people can have real choice about how and when they die and no one else has to face the same terrible dilemma as Debbie and Omar.

You could also give to our Debbie appeal, which is enclosed with this newsletter.

For more information contact Jessica Tomlin on 020 7479 7736 and jessica.tomlin@dignityindying.org.uk or Davina Hehir on 020 7479 7738 or davina@dignityindying.org.uk.

Assisting a suicide is a crime punishable by up to 14 years in prison. Over 80 British citizens have been assisted to die in Switzerland. Several people who have accompanied family members have been subjected to lengthy investigations and even arrest upon their return.

Scottish Parliament debates right to die

Member of the Scottish Parliament, Margo MacDonald, who has Parkinson's disease, spoke up in a debate in the Scottish Parliament declaring that she wants the option to end her own life if her condition deteriorates.

The debate, called by MSP Jeremy Purvis, was about choices for terminally ill patients. He said: "The time is right for the Parliament to be able to hold a full and open inquiry into choices that people can and should be able to make at the end of a terminal illness."



Debate in Scottish Parliament

Margo argued that assisted dying should be legalised. She also said palliative care was not always

effective and people should have the right to choose. Health Secretary, Nicola Sturgeon, said there were no plans to change the law and that the Government should focus on providing quality palliative care.

However, Margo's statement generated a storm of debate in the media, with Dignity in Dying providing comment on BBC News 24, Radio 5 Live and across the Scottish media. On the opposite page Margo tells us more about her views on assisted dying.

Val helps spread the word



Val backs Margo on BBC

deteriorated and she now spends 22 hours a day in bed. Doctors have predicted she will soon lose her sight and speech and might only have six months to live.

Val told the BBC: "I watched my mum die of cancer when I was in my 30s and it was the hardest thing I have ever had to do.

"I myself want to be allowed to die with dignity."

One of Dignity in Dying's Scottish supporters, Val MacKay, agreed to be interviewed by the BBC and the Telegraph to help raise awareness of our campaign.

Val, 50, was diagnosed with progressive multiple sclerosis four years ago. Her condition has rapidly

Val has contemplated suicide but now her illness has progressed and she would be unable to end her life without assistance. When she saw a documentary about Dr Anne Turner, who travelled to Switzerland to end her life, Val felt envious. However, she is worried about implicating any members of her family in assisted

suicide. Val said she fully backed MSP Margo MacDonald's call at the Scottish Parliament for a public debate on assisted dying. She added: "Any change to the legislation will probably be too late for me, but hopefully, in the future, people will not need to go through what I am going through."

Please make your voice heard

If you live in Scotland, please write to your MSP in support of Margo MacDonald. Ask them to indicate their support for reviewing a change in the law by signing the motion: **S3M-01452: Choices for People Coming to the End of Terminal Illness.**

In her own words: Margo MacDonald MSP on assisted death



Margo provokes debate

In talking about the end of life, let's start at the beginning . . . I don't support euthanasia. I do support having the best possible palliative care, whether at home, in a hospice, or any other place a terminally ill person wishes to be when life ends.

I welcome the long-overdue improvements in this field, salute the work done by carers and contribute in a small way to the fundraising for St. Columba's Hospice in Edinburgh.

But I also support the right of terminally ill people to end their life should it become unbearable, and to be able to obtain assistance to do this legally. That's why I attended the debate, initiated by the LibDem MSP for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, Jeremy Purvis, on assisted suicide. I intended to show support for his persistence and to listen and learn.

What prompted my declaration of interest, and my comments in favour of Jeremy's motion, were remarks made by other MSPs regarding what they saw as the irrelevance of the topic and the absence of public interest. A few years ago, a UK newspaper published an opinion survey showing a very high percentage of its readers to be in favour of the principles enshrined in Jeremy's motion, I just wanted to put the record straight, and the e-mail and snail-mail delivered to my office suggests I was right to do so. Only one person has expressed opposition to my stance.

Widespread support

Support for a public debate and a legal way to be devised for assisted suicide has come from all parts of the UK and from a passenger on a boat somewhere in the Caribbean! The people who've contacted me face up to what the BMA [British Medical Association] won't . . . that for some terminally ill people a dignified, peaceful end to life cannot be brought about by drugs or even the most sensitive care.

The effectiveness of palliative care varies from patient to patient, and unfortunately for some, offers minimal relief. It's amongst this group that the wish to have a choice of assisted dying is of real interest.

I'm lucky, my Parkinson's is mild, and in the thirteen or so years since it was diagnosed, I've worked normally and exercised regularly. But my luck might not hold up and

my condition may degenerate more severely than the present prognosis. In that circumstance, I'd like to be able to count on obtaining assistance without asking anyone to commit a crime in helping me to die.

Having a legal right is not the same as being obliged to act on that right. It's quite possible that knowing I can legally be assisted to die, if I choose to truncate any prolonged period of severe impairment, might be enough to make the situation bearable.

The mail that's come into my office shows lots of people feel the same about the right to choose to die. But I'm also aware some people fear the legal right to assist dying will drift into encouragement to die, or the development of requests from terminally ill people who don't want to burden their relatives. Some feel that it's asking too much of doctors, ignoring the acknowledged practice of overdosing for relief of pain, knowing that this will hasten the end of life. Objection also derives from religious conviction, and I have every respect for that, but nowadays we try to enact laws that reflect the wide variety of our social and moral beliefs.

However, we should debate the dilemmas faced by people, their families, health workers and policy-makers at the end of life.

Note: This article first appeared in The Sunday Post 30th March 2008.

New advance decisions toolkit for healthcare professionals

As you will be aware, advance decisions (living wills) were given statutory force when the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) came into force in October 2007. The Department of Health commissioned Dignity in Dying, as experts on the subject, to produce a document for healthcare professionals giving guidance on advance decisions and the Mental Capacity Act.

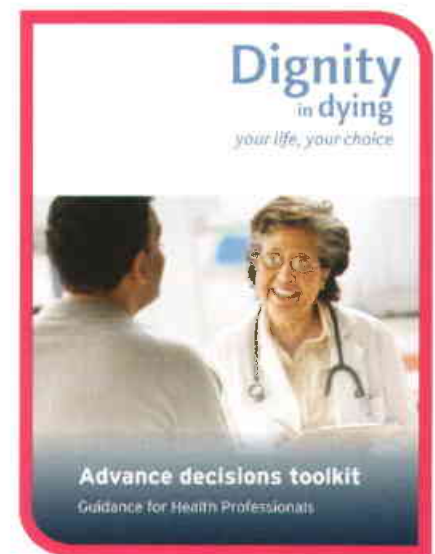
Our new toolkit provides good practice guidelines for health professionals. It is vital for doctors who may be involved in implementing advance decisions: failure to comply with a valid and applicable advance decision could lead to a claim for damages for battery or a criminal charge of assault.

Health care professionals will also find the toolkit useful if a patient

asks them for advice on making advance decisions. The toolkit covers areas such as the recent change of law and its practical implications and advice on caring for patients with advance decisions. It also demonstrates that advance decisions can be a very useful aid to good communication, encouraging patients and doctors to have honest conversations about wishes and fears, prognosis and treatment preferences.

Sarah Wootton, Chief Executive of Dignity in Dying, said: "It is very important that healthcare professionals have a clear understanding of advance decisions if they are to work to the maximum benefit of the patient.

"More and more people are choosing to make advance decisions to maintain more control over their



health. Healthcare professionals have an important role to play in educating the public of the benefits of making an advance decision."

The toolkit can be downloaded for free from <http://www.dignityindying.org.uk/livingwills/guidance/index.asp>

Esther Rantzen to address AGM 2008

Our next Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 7th October in central London. In an exciting change to our usual format, Esther Rantzen will give a speech before the official business of the AGM. She will launch our forthcoming guide to rights at the end of life. Full details will be given in the next issue of Dignity in Dying News.



Would you like to become a Board member?

If you are interested in joining the Dignity in Dying Board please see the enclosed leaflet for more information. We are particularly interested in candidates with skills and experience in nursing, journalism, palliative care or the law, but are open to other applicants who consider they have something to offer Dignity in Dying now. Applications must be received by Friday 13th June 2008.

World news

Ten years of evidence from Oregon shows no risk to vulnerable people

A decade of studies by the State of Oregon and independent researchers have shown that contrary to predictions, the groundbreaking Oregon Death with Dignity Act (ODDA), has not led to vulnerable people being targeted by unscrupulous friends or relatives. In fact it has greatly contributed to improved end-of-life care.

President of Compassion & Choices in Oregon, Barbara Coombs Lee, says: "None of our opponents' predicted problems have come true. To the contrary, Oregon is ranked second in the nation in quality care at the end-of-life. We urge other states to adopt similar laws."

The evidence from annual reports has found that all dying patients in the state of Oregon have benefited from improved health care, as measured by clinical standards. Since it came into effect, 341 people have used the ODDA to have a peaceful medically assisted death, but many thousands more have taken comfort from the fact that the option is there.

Residents of Oregon support the ODDA and leading anti-choice activists have admitted that they will not be able to overturn the law. To mark the tenth anniversary, Compassion and Choices of Oregon has produced an extremely powerful film,

which can be viewed on youtube in two parts.

Watch these films

Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9pfIRtYQEw>.

Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urWz-l5Mbkc>.

We highly recommend these videos - please watch them, rate them and recommend them to your friends.

Sarah Wootton, Chief Executive of Dignity in Dying, adds: "On the ODDA's tenth anniversary, we can clearly see that the Act allows people from Oregon, who are suffering unbearably, the choice to end their lives with dignity. It is time that British citizens were given the same choice."

Key facts about people who had an assisted death in Oregon in 2007:

- 100% had medical insurance
- 88% were enrolled in hospice care
- 90% of patients died at home
- Majority of patients were well educated

The full report can be found at: <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/pas/index.shtml>.

Campaign launched in Washington State

A coalition of doctors, nurses, hospice patients, family members and organisations has launched the Washington State Death with Dignity Initiative. This would allow mentally competent, terminally ill adults, diagnosed with six months or less to live, the legal choice to access and self-administer life-ending medication.

Governor of the State, Booth Gardner, said: "After a lifetime in public service, I view this as my final campaign - a campaign for all the people of Washington State to control fundamental end of life choices." Residents in Washington State will vote on the initiative on the same day as the US Presidential Election on November 4th this year.

For more information, visit:
<http://www.yeson1000.org/>



Caring Advocates

Caring Advocates, based in the USA, educates the public and professionals about voluntary refusal of food and drink, as a peaceful, legal option for terminally ill people who wish to end their suffering. If you would like to find out more visit the website www.caringadvocates.org. Dr Stanley Terman, founder of Caring Advocates, has written a book on the subject, called *The Best Way to Say Goodbye*, which is available from: <http://thebestgoodbye.com/>.

News update

Angry exchange over Bishop's remarks - have your say

The Bishop of Durham Tom Wright, wrote a column for The Times newspaper arguing against assisted dying. He started it by writing: "David Aaronovitch, using the pulpit of his column, challenged me to justify an "outrageous claim" that I made in my Easter sermon. I said that there was a "militantly atheist and secularist lobby" that believes that "we have the right to kill... surplus old people".

Bishop Wright concluded by saying: "Palliative care, in which Britain is a world leader, brings genuine relief and comfort to patients and families alike, instead of encouraging them

into the murky world of potential mixed motives and huge suppressed moral questions."

As you can imagine this provoked a strong response from readers. Chief Executive of Dignity in Dying, Sarah Wootton, had a letter published and many people emailed messages to The Times.

Join the debate

To read Bishop Wright's column and add your comment visit:
www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article3669714.ece

Please send a copy of your comment to
info@dignityindying.org.uk

Dying alone report launched



In April, Dignity in Dying commissioned research into fears about death, which found that one in three people's greatest fear about dying was being alone. The YouGov survey also found that people over 55 - particularly those who live alone - were more concerned about the practicalities surrounding dying, such as having their treatment wishes respected and dying in a place of their choice than younger people. The results, published in the Dying Alone report, achieved widespread coverage in the national media, including Sky News and Channel 4, and extensive regional coverage. To read the report, visit:

http://www.dignityindying.org.uk/uploadedFiles/About_Us/Dying%20Alone.pdf.

Trial of man who assisted suicide

In February, Robert Cook, who assisted the suicide of his terminally ill wife, Vanessa, was given a suspended sentence. The judge described the case as "tragic" and the trial provoked extensive media interest. Dignity in Dying provided articles, comment and debate across local and national media on



the subject of 'mercy killing' and why the current law on assisted dying is failing.